

CITY OF ALAMEDA

Memorandum

To: Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council

From: Dennis Owens
Chair of the Historical Advisory Board

Date: September 6, 2011

Re: Recommendation to City Council to Include a Budget Line Item to Address
Deferred Maintenance at the Historic Municipal Garage Behind City Hall

BACKGROUND

In 2010, the City secured a \$25,000 grant from the State Historic Preservation Office and a \$3,000 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to evaluate the existing condition of the historic municipal garage located behind City Hall and to facilitate the reuse of this building. The evaluation was conducted by Garavaglia Architecture Inc, an architecture firm specializing in historic preservation.

The Historic Structures Report (HSR) purpose is to document the historic significance and character-defining features of the Garage; determine the work required to complete necessary seismic and other upgrades for occupancy; and to determine the work necessary to preserve and rehabilitate the structure for use as a flexible retail/office/public use venue that is consistent with the Civic Center Vision.

Currently used as storage and parking for select City vehicles, its rehabilitation has been identified as a key component to the City's proposed Civic Center Vision. Currently, this vision includes the adaptive reuse of the structure and its integration into a new public plaza as a part of a second entrance to City Hall.

Pursuant to the City Charter, the Historical Advisory Board's purpose is to 'preserve and protect structures, sites and areas of historical significance in the City.' On June 2, 2011 the Historical Advisory Board reviewed the draft HSR, provided comments to the consultant and determined that it should bring the condition of the historic structure to City Council's attention.

DISCUSSION

The HSR determined that the structure is generally in good condition. However, deferred maintenance has resulted in a number of issues that will be more difficult to address as time passes. The report states that some building maintenance efforts should be undertaken immediately to stem deterioration.

City Council
Agenda Item #3-C
09-06-11

The Historical Advisory Board finds that the following are of critical importance:

- Trim back the Coast Live Oak tree to eliminate leaves and other debris from falling on the roof and clogging the gutters.
- Sweep roof and clear clogged drains.
- Clear internal downspouts and install new gutters and external downspouts where needed to properly lead rainwater away from the foundation and brick walls.

Furthermore, the report highlighted the following maintenance issues, which the Historical Advisory Board deems important:

- Localized renewing of mortar joints (repointing) after proper testing to re-establish a sound and weather-resistant building envelope
- Basic maintenance of windows (sanding, painting, and reputtying)
- Seismic upgrades would include tying the roof trusses to the top of the walls. Repair of the damaged and deteriorating cornice, modillions, and soffit

City Hall was designated as a City of Alameda Historic Monument in 1976 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. While the Alameda Municipal Garage was unfortunately not listed as a contributor to the City Hall Historic Monument, it nevertheless is a contributor to the setting of the City Hall. Specifically, it is locally significant for its role in the transition of Alameda's City government from its 19th century roots to its 20th century form and for its relationship with the National Register listed City Hall. This period was one of marked growth within the City as well as a period of extraordinary technological change. The construction of the garage symbolized the City's commitment to using technology to improve its services, and reduced vehicular maintenance cost, thus providing financially responsible services for the City. Its design is harmonious with City Hall and the two buildings have a clear aesthetic connection, evidence of their historical relationship.

The Historical Advisory Board respectfully requests that City Council direct staff to address the deferred maintenance on rain gutters and rain leaders. With relatively little effort the drains could be declogged and missing rain leaders could be replaced. The HAB realizes that the City Council is faced with tough budget choices in this time of economic downturn. However, simple maintenance will extend the life of the building and make it easier to convert it so that it can be put into a viable economic use other than storage.

Respectfully submitted,

 8/17/11

Dennis Owens AIA
Chair of the Historical Advisory Board

Exhibit:

1. Historic Structure Report